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SUBJECT: MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY ISSUE AT UNESCO 175TH EXECUTIVE BOARD
(FALL 2006)

¶1. (U) MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY The Medium Term Strategy (MTS) for 2008-2013 (34 C/4) was the source of hours of discussion and a major "thematic" debate on UNESCO's role in the world. (Comment: we know of no other organization that is as self-absorbed as UNESCO and wastes as much time discussing its raison d'etre.) The next MTS, which is to be adopted by the General Conference in the fall of 2007 will serve as the basis for UNESCO's overall program strategy for 2008-2013.

¶2. (U) A consistent theme in all the Member State's interventions on the MTS is that UNESCO must do less and do it better. Programs must be reviewed for their usefulness and sunset clauses need to be built into every new program. The reality is that numerous countries continued to press their pet projects. One of the most egregious was a Russian proposal to have UNESCO become the 15th UN agency to get involved in renewable energy. (Comment: The irony of this was clearly lost on the Russians as UNESCO did have a renewable energy section until the late 90's directed by a Russian, but it was closed down due to corruption.) The introduction of an expanded program to study migration was also a new topic of discussion.

¶3. (U) The Secretariat's first draft (175 EX/21) of the MTS, based on input from member states and national commissions) was not especially well received. The French Ambassador was particularly critical of this document. There was also much discussion about the fact that the science review, potentially reforming the Natural and Social Science Sectors, is still underway. The U.S. and others emphasized that it was not realistic to include these sectors in any MTS planning before the report is finished. The same logic was cited for the Cultural Sector, with a potential restructuring following the arrival of the new ADG for Culture, Francoise Riviere. Another reason given was the need to wait for a management audit in the World Heritage Center to be completed before there could be any

talk about how this flagship program fits into the Medium Term Strategy. There was also some concern about the fact that the ongoing discussions in New York on UN reform must also be integrated into the MTS and must not be pre-judged. There were many complaints that the document was too heavily Secretariat inspired, and did not take sufficient direction from the Member States.

¶4. (U) A working group, with three representatives from each Electoral Group (including the U.S.), was formed to help guide the Secretariat's next version of the MTS. The first sign of trouble

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was the inability to select a chairman for the group. As neither the Indian Ambassador nor the Nigerian Ambassador was willing to withdraw from consideration, a decision was taken to have them serve as co-chairs.

¶5. (U) Despite a marathon effort to deliver something to the Executive Board before it finished, the informal working group's output was a wish list of programs with no sacred cows, such as UNESCO's dubious philosophy program or the Russian energy project, spared. Cultural diversity also figured prominently in the final document with a number of countries led by Canada, Switzerland, Brazil and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (normally a non-entity at UNESCO) pushing for mention of the as yet unratified convention as a guiding principle for the next medium term strategy. (Comment: other UNESCO members are aware of U.S. concerns about this convention; their efforts to highlight it can only be read as a poke in the eye of the US. Here the Indian chair, who realized the divisiveness of the issue, did her best to keep this item out of the final document, though it was added at the final plenary meeting.)

¶6. (SBU) The United Kingdom, well aware of U.S. concerns, was also particularly insistent on including mention of UNESCO's normative function in the draft document. (Comment: The UK Ambassador, showing increased sensitivity to US concerns, has raised this issue for discussion several times in the past week, adding, "when there is consensus support." End comment.) Other troublesome points that emerged over U.S. objections were language that talked of "sharing" of knowledge rather than "transmission," an emphasis on a "culture of peace," the highlighting of UNESCO's foresight function, promoting cultural industries and the continued need for the ethics program. (Comment: With no U.S. presence for 19 years, UNESCO has adopted a lot of meaningless buzz words and meaningless programs that other member states have not care to challenge. End comment.)

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